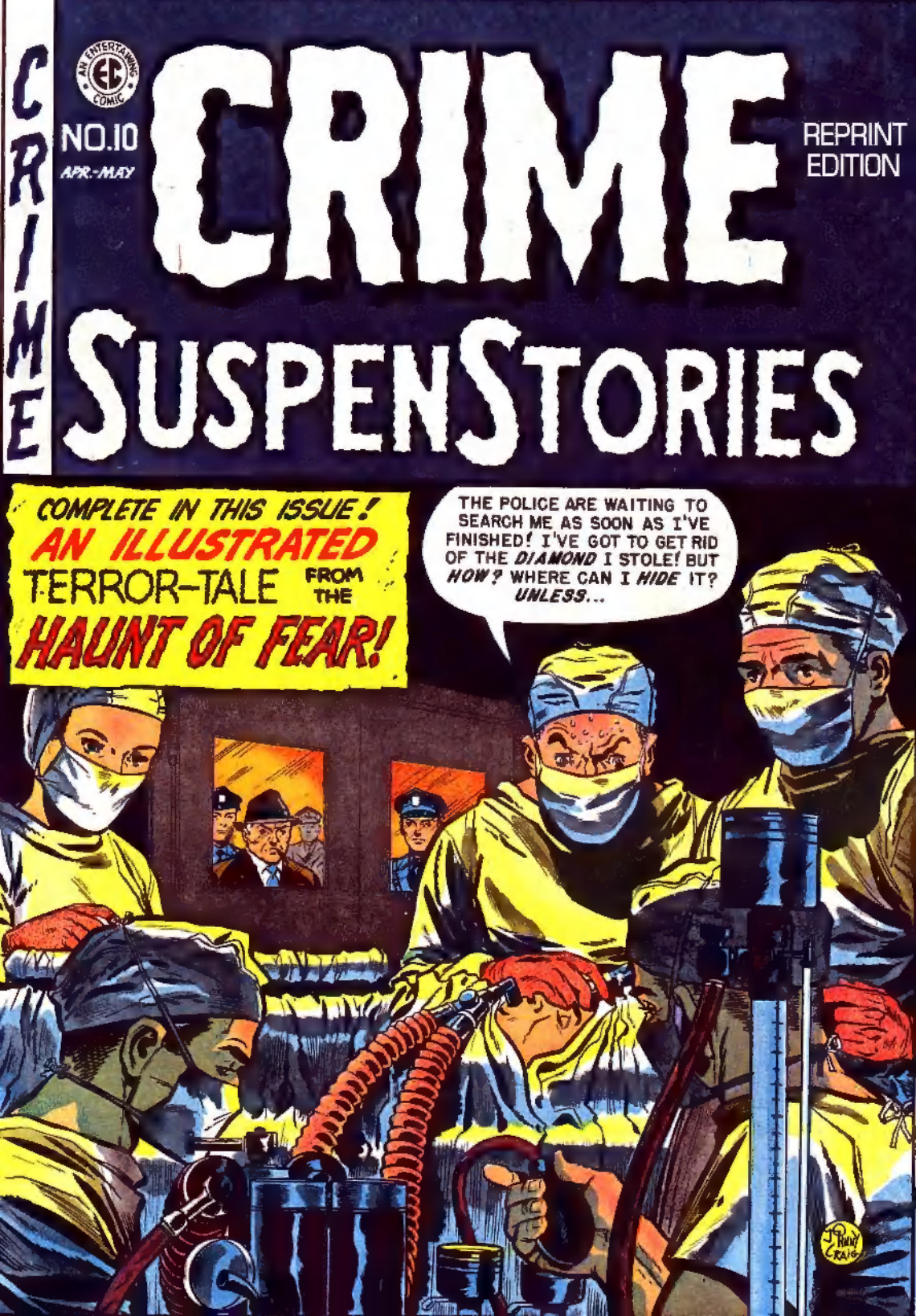

CRIME SUSPENSTORIES
AN ENTERTAINING COMIC
EC
NO.10
APR.-MAY
REPRINT EDITION
COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE!
AN ILLUSTRATED TERROR-TALE FROM THE HAUNT OF FEAR!
THE POLICE ARE WAITING TO SEARCH ME AS SOON AS I'VE FINISHED! I'VE GOT TO GET RID OF THE DIAMOND I STOLE! BUT HOW? WHERE CAN I HIDE IT? UNLESS...

...ROCKS IN HIS HEAD!

BUT, CYNTHIA! A MINK COAT! ???
IT ONLY COST $4,000, CHARLES! YOU ACT AS IF I BOUGHT ONE OF THE EXPENSIVE ONES!

ONLY $4,000?!! HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU THINK I HAVE?
NOW STOP GETTING EXCITED! AFTER ALL, I THINK I'M ENTITLED TO A LITTLE SOMETHING ONCE IN A WHILE!

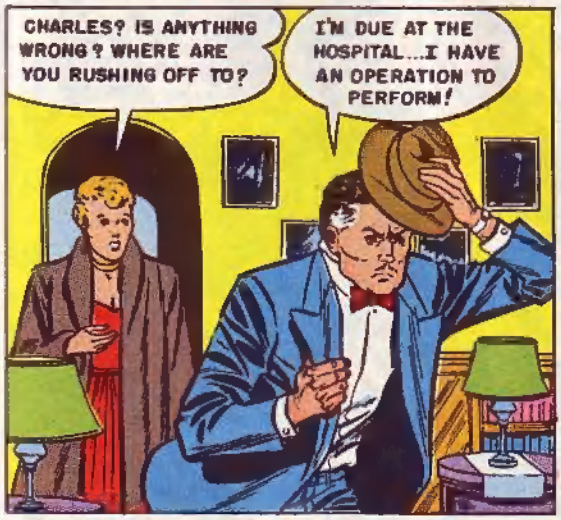
A LITTLE..?!! BUT...BUT I CAN'T AFFORD IT!! $75 HATS... SIX AT A TIME! $150...$200 A DRESS! NOW IT'S A FOUR THOUSAND DOLLAR COAT!

THREE WEEKS AGO, YOU BOUGHT THE MOST EXPENSIVE AUTOMOBILE MADE! I'M UP TO MY EARS IN DEBT!
TCH! THIS WEATHER IS RUINING MY NEW PERMANENT!

AND BEFORE THAT, YOU THREW A $3,000 DINNER PARTY FOR ALL THE 'IMPORTANT' PEOPLE IN TOWN!
YES...BUT IT WAS SO ELEVATING... DON'T YOU THINK?

AND SIX MONTHS AGO, YOU HAD OUR ENTIRE HOME REDECORATED! I CAN'T AFFORD IT, I TELL YOU!
OH, CHARLES! HOW NICE OF YOU TO REMIND ME...

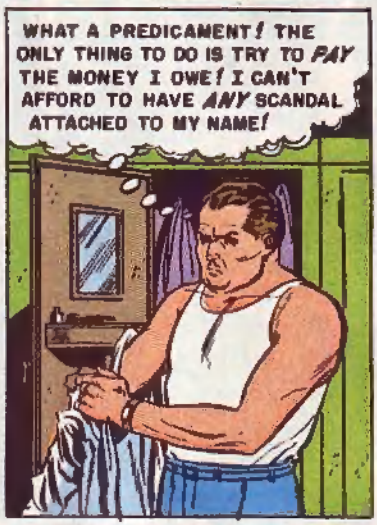
I PHONED THE INTERIOR DECORATORS YESTERDAY! THEY'LL BE HERE NEXT WEEK!


CHARLES? IS ANYTHING WRONG? WHERE ARE YOU RUSHING OFF TO?
I'M DUE AT THE HOSPITAL...I HAVE AN OPERATION TO PERFORM!

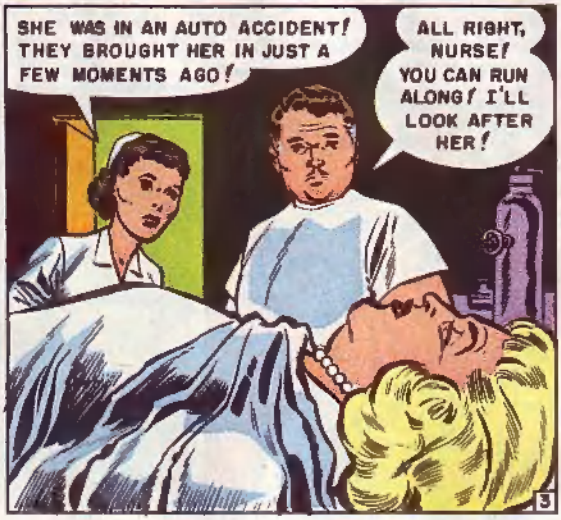
BLASTED WIFE! WHY CAN'T SHE REALIZE THE SPOT SHE'S PUT ME IN BY BEING SO EXTRAVAGANT? IF I DON'T PAY OFF THOSE DEBTS, I'LL *REALLY* BE IN TROUBLE!

SHE'S EVEN ENDANGERED MY REPUTATION...MY *CAREER!* THE NEWSPAPERS WILL PLAY IT UP FOR ALL IT'S WORTH!

...AND THE MEDICAL BOARD AT THE HOSPITAL! THEY WON'T LIKE IT EITHER! *I'LL BE RUINED!*
CITY
HOSPITA
MCMXX


WHAT A PREDICAMENT! THE ONLY THING TO DO IS TRY TO *PAY* THE MONEY I OWE! I CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE *ANY* SCANDAL ATTACHED TO MY NAME!

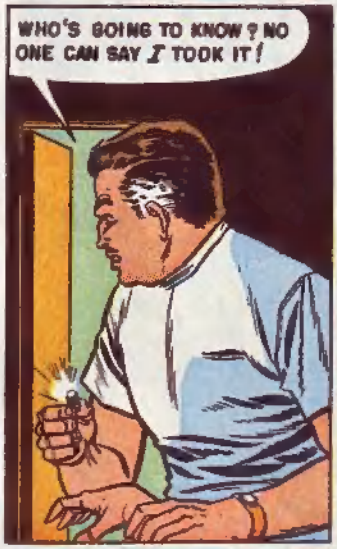
THE BIG PROBLEM IS...*WHERE* TO *GET* THE MONEY! CYNTHIA'S PUT ME IN DEBT FOR..FOR *THOUSANDS!*
OH, GOOD MORNING, DR. ANDREWS! AN EMERGENCY PATIENT JUST ARRIVED! WILL YOU EXAMINE HER?


SHE WAS IN AN AUTO ACCIDENT! THEY BROUGHT HER IN JUST A FEW MOMENTS AGO!
ALL RIGHT, NURSE! YOU CAN RUN ALONG! I'LL LOOK AFTER HER!

...INJURY DOESN'T *LOOK* SERIOUS! WELL, I'LL TAKE HER PULSE FIRST, AND...
WOW!

WILL YOU LOOK AT THE SIZE OF HER RING! THAT DIAMOND MUST BE FIVE OR SIX CARATS... WORTH *$10,000* AT LEAST! MAYBE A LOT MORE!

BILLS
$4,000
$200
MINK COAT!
DEBTS
$500
DECORATOR
$400
DUE
$700
BILLS
I.O.U

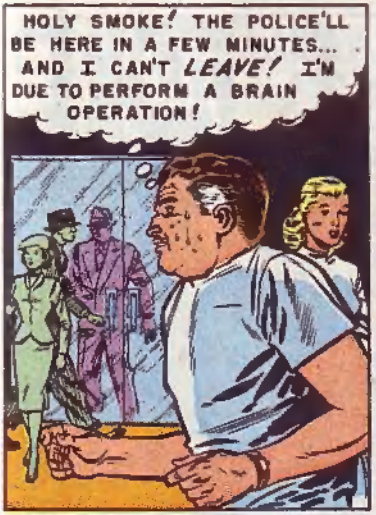

WHO'S GOING TO KNOW? NO ONE CAN SAY *I* TOOK IT!

HURRIEDLY, DR. ANDREWS COMPLETES HIS EXAMINATION, THEN LEAVES THE ROOM...
AH! NO ONE AROUND! THEY WON'T KNOW *HOW* LONG I WAS IN THERE! I'LL TURN IN MY REPORT LATER... NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT WOMAN! SHE'LL WAKE UP AND THEY'LL SEND HER HOME!

HA! AND WHEN SHE SEES HER RING IS GONE, SHE'LL THINK SHE LOST IT IN THE ACCIDENT! SHE'LL *NEVER* DREAM SOMEONE *HERE* STOLE IT!

LA DEE DA DE DA DE DUM

HELP! I'VE BEEN ROBBED!


HOLY SMOKE! THE POLICE'LL BE HERE IN A FEW MINUTES... AND I CAN'T *LEAVE!* I'M DUE TO PERFORM A BRAIN OPERATION!

I WONDER IF THAT WOMAN KNOWS *I* STOLE HER RING! *NAH!* IMPOSSIBLE! SHE WAS UNCONSCIOUS! BUT... STILL...

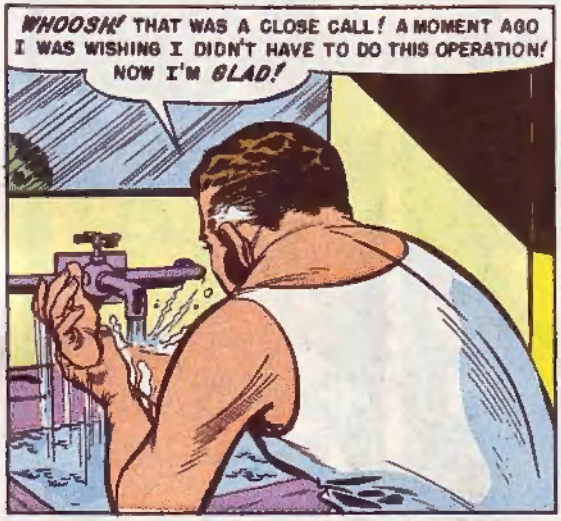
OH, WHAT AM I WORRYING ABOUT? IF THEY QUESTION ME, I'LL SAY THERE WAS NO RING ON HER HAND WHEN I TOOK HER PULSE!

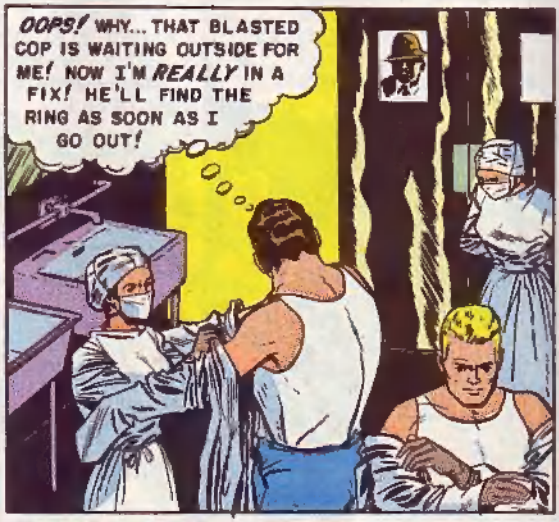
THEY'LL BELIEVE ME! *UH, OH!* HERE THEY COME!
ATTENTION, EVERYONE! WE'RE POLICE OFFICERS!

WE'VE RECEIVED A REPORT THAT A COSTLY DIAMOND RING HAS BEEN *STOLEN!* ALL THE EXITS ARE GUARDED, SO DON'T TRY TO LEAVE! WE'RE GOING TO QUESTION AND *SEARCH* EVERY-ONE IN THE HOSPITAL!
SEARCH? GOOD HEAVENS! IF THEY FIND THE RING IN MY POCKET, I'M DONE FOR!

HEY! YOU, THERE! DOCTOR!
OMIGOSH! HE WANTS *ME!* I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING! I CAN'T BE *CAUGHT!*

HEY, DOCTOR... YOU DEAF? I WANT TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS...
ER...WELL...AH, NOT NOW, OFFICER! CAN'T STOP NOW! YOU SEE, I...ER... HAVE AN *OPERATION* TO PERFORM! I'LL SPEAK WITH YOU LATER! HEH!
OPERATING ROO

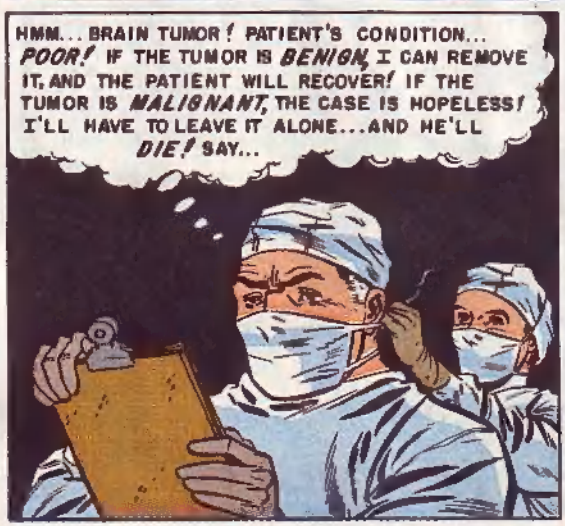

WHOOSH! THAT WAS A CLOSE CALL! A MOMENT AGO I WAS WISHING I DIDN'T HAVE TO DO THIS OPERATION! NOW I'M GLAD!

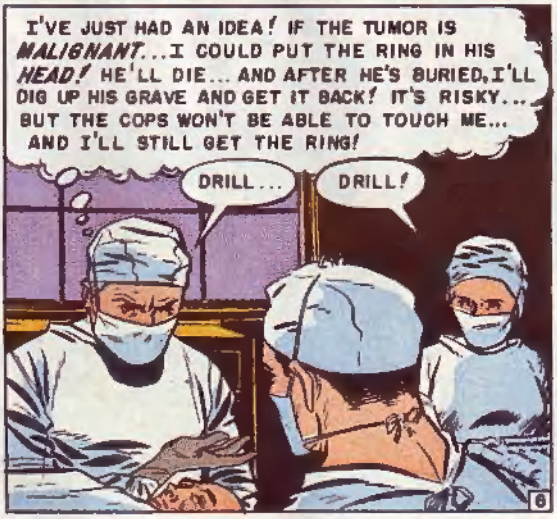

OOPS! WHY... THAT BLASTED COP IS WAITING OUTSIDE FOR ME! NOW I'M REALLY IN A FIX! HE'LL FIND THE RING AS SOON AS I GO OUT!

...UNLESS I GET RID OF IT SOMEHOW... WHILE I'M IN HERE! BUT I CAN'T HIDE IT HERE! THIS ROOM IS CLEANED AFTER EVERY OPERATION! THE RING WOULD BE FOUND!

THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER WAY! THERE HAS TO!
DR. ANDREWS, THE PATIENT IS READY FOR SURGERY!

HERE'S HIS CASE HISTORY!
ALL RIGHT, NURSE! THANK YOU!

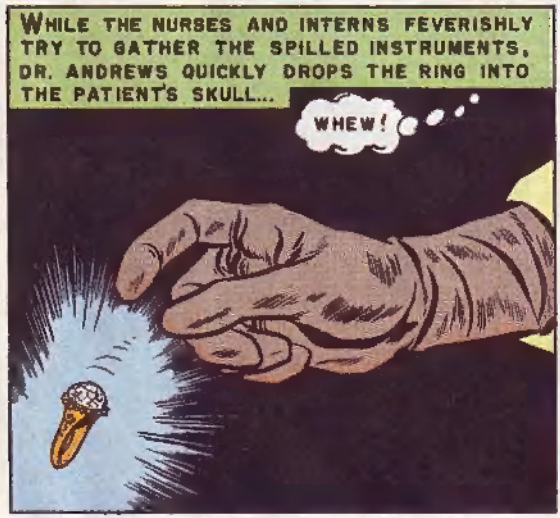

HMM... BRAIN TUMOR! PATIENT'S CONDITION... POOR! IF THE TUMOR IS BENIGN, I CAN REMOVE IT, AND THE PATIENT WILL RECOVER! IF THE TUMOR IS MALIGNANT, THE CASE IS HOPELESS! I'LL HAVE TO LEAVE IT ALONE...AND HE'LL DIE! SAY...


I'VE JUST HAD AN IDEA! IF THE TUMOR IS MALIGNANT...I COULD PUT THE RING IN HIS HEAD! HE'LL DIE... AND AFTER HE'S BURIED, I'LL DIG UP HIS GRAVE AND GET IT BACK! IT'S RISKY... BUT THE COPS WON'T BE ABLE TO TOUCH ME... AND I'LL STILL GET THE RING!
DRILL...
DRILL!

AH! I'VE EXPOSED THE TUMOR... BUT IT'S *BENIGN!* I...I COULD SAVE HIS LIFE BY REMOVING IT! BUT...BUT I HAVE *MYSELF* TO THINK OF!
HOW DOES IT LOOK, DOCTOR? CAN YOU SAVE HIM?

SAVE HIM?! ER...AH...NO! NO...IT'S *HOPELESS!* THE TUMOR IS *MALIGNANT!* THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO EXCEPT CLOSE HIM UP!
NOW TO DISTRACT THEM SOMEHOW, SO I CAN PUT THE RING IN HIS HEAD!

LOOK OUT, DOCTOR! YOU'VE KNOCKED OVER THE INSTRUMENT TRAY!


WHILE THE NURSES AND INTERNS FEVERISHLY TRY TO GATHER THE SPILLED INSTRUMENTS, DR. ANDREWS QUICKLY DROPS THE RING INTO THE PATIENT'S SKULL...
WHEW!

AFTER SEWING UP THE SCALP, HE STEPS OUT INTO THE HALL...
YOU WISHED TO SPEAK TO ME, OFFICER?
YES, DOCTOR! YOU DON'T MIND BEING SEARCHED, DO YOU? JUST ROUTINE!

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE MISSING RING?
WHY, NOTHING! I EXAMINED THE WOMAN WHEN THEY BROUGHT HER IN, AND SHE DIDN'T HAVE ANY RING ON THEN!

...OF COURSE IT'S ALSO QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE AUTO ACCIDENT HAS CAUSED HER TO...ER...*IMAGINE* THINGS!
HE'S CLEAN, INSPECTOR!

WELL, THANKS A LOT, DOCTOR! SORRY TO HAVE TROUBLED YOU! I WISH EVERYONE WAS AS COOPERATIVE AS YOU'VE BEEN!
NO TROUBLE AT ALL, INSPECTOR!

IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOW, DR. ANDREWS WATCHES HIS "SPECIAL" PATIENT CLOSELY...
HMM... HE'S FAILING! HE WON'T LIVE MUCH LONGER!

... AND FINALLY...
HE'S DEAD! I... I FEEL TERRIBLE!
DON'T TAKE IT SO HARD, ANDREWS! THESE THINGS HAPPEN TO THE BEST OF US!

A WEEK PASSES... THEN ANOTHER...
HA, HA! THE POOR, POOR WIDOW SHOULD BE READY TO RECEIVE MY *DEEPEST*, MY MOST *SINCERE* SYMPATHY! HAH! AS SOON AS I FIND OUT WHERE HE'S BURIED, I'LL DIG UP THE GRAVE AND BUST HIS HEAD OPEN! THE RING WILL BE MINE AGAIN!

AND SO, SOMETIME LATER THE SAME DAY...
OH! DR. ANDREWS! HOW NICE OF YOU TO CALL! DO COME IN!
THANK YOU! I WANTED TO TELL YOU HOW SORRY I AM! YOUR HUSBAND WAS THE FIRST PATIENT I EVER LOST!

I... I FELT I COULDN'T REST UNTIL... UNTIL I VISITED HIS LAST RESTING PLACE AND PAID MY RESPECTS! IF... IF YOU COULD TELL ME JUST WHERE HE WAS BURIED...
BURIED? OH, BUT WE DIDN'T *BURY* HIM...

...WE HAD HIS BODY *CREMATED!*
THE END
EDITORS' NOTE: DIAMOND... ONE OF THE THREE ALLOTROPIC FORMS OF CARBON... BURNS AT A TEMPERATURE OF 850°! BODIES ARE CREMATED AT 2000°!

LADY KILLER

Jack Kamen

NO ONE WAS IN THE LOBBY! I LOOKED UP AND DOWN THE DESERTED STREET AND DUCKED INTO JEANNE'S APARTMENT BUILDING! THE SELF-SERVICE ELEVATOR WAS WAITING AND I TOOK IT UP TO THE SIXTH FLOOR! I LEANED ON JEANNE'S BELL UNTIL I HEARD HER SLIPPERED FEET CLACKING TOWARD THE DOOR! IT SWUNG OPEN AND...
RALPH! DARLING! BUT... I THOUGHT YOU WERE OUT OF TOWN!
SH-H-H-H! LET ME COME IN! I'LL TELL YOU WHY I'VE COME BACK!

JEANNE STEPPED ASIDE AND I ENTERED HER NEAT LITTLE ONE-ROOM APARTMENT! THE CONVERTIBLE SOFA-BED WAS OPEN AND THE BLANKET AND SHEETS WERE RUMPLED! I'D OBVIOUSLY AWAKENED HER! JEANNE CLOSED THE DOOR QUIETLY BEHIND ME AND I TOOK HER IN MY ARMS...
I'M GOING TO KILL HER, JEANNE! JUST LIKE YOU WANT! I'VE MADE UP MY MIND!
IT'S THE ONLY WAY, DARLING! THE ONLY WAY! I KNEW YOU'D FINALLY SEE IT!

JEANNE SLIPPED OUT OF MY ARMS AND WENT TO THE DRESSER! SHE OPENED A DRAWER, REMOVED SOMETHING BLACK AND SHINY, AND BROUGHT IT TO ME...

YOU'LL WANT *THIS*?

YES! IS IT *LOADED*?

SHE NODDED! I SAT DOWN WEARILY ON THE MUSSED-UP BED...

I TRIED TO *REASON* WITH HER! SHE WOULDN'T *LISTEN!* SHE *REFUSED* TO GIVE ME A *DIVORCE!*

I *TOLD* YOU SHE'D BE LIKE THAT! I *KNOW* HER!

I CHECKED IN AT A HOTEL UPSTATE! I TOLD THEM I WAS *TIRED* AND DIDN'T WANT TO BE *DISTURBED!*

GOOD! YOU'LL *NEED* A STRONG ALIBI!

I SLIPPED OUT THROUGH THE *SERVICE ENTRANCE* AND DROVE DIRECTLY *HERE!* I'VE GOT TO *GO*, NOW!

YES! GOOD-BYE, DARLING! GOOD LUCK!

I KISSED JEANNE... SLIPPED THE GUN INTO MY INSIDE COAT POCKET AND LEFT! I DROVE CROSS-TOWN TO MY APARTMENT AND PARKED A FEW BLOCKS FROM IT! THEN I WALKED THE REST OF THE WAY! IT WAS ABOUT TWO A.M. WHEN I GOT THERE...

MILDRED SHOULD BE SOUND ASLEEP BY NOW!

I WENT AROUND TO THE BACK OF THE BUILDING AND PULLED DOWN THE FIRE-ESCAPE LADDER! I LIFTED MYSELF UP AND CLIMBED QUIETLY TO THE LANDING OUTSIDE MY APARTMENT...

IT'S DARK INSIDE! AND SHE'S LEFT THE WINDOW OPEN!

MILDRED *ALWAYS* LEFT THE WINDOW ON THE FIRE-ESCAPE OPEN! I'D *WARNED* HER ABOUT IT SO *MANY* TIMES! NOW IT WAS GOING TO PROVE TO BE HER OWN UNDOING! I LET MYSELF IN AND CROSSED TO THE BEDROOM! I TOOK OUT THE GUN, PULLED THE BOLT, AND LET IT SLAM FORWARD! I STEPPED THROUGH THE DOORWAY! THE BED WAS EMPTY...

WHAT THE...? SHE'S NOT HERE!

MILDRED WAS OUT! THE BED HADN'T BEEN SLEPT IN! I SAT DOWN ON THE SATIN SPREAD AND WAITED! I POINTED THE GUN TOWARD THE DOOR.

AS SOON AS SHE COMES IN, I'LL BLOW HER BRAINS OUT!

I COULD HEAR THE NIGHT-TABLE CLOCK TICKING, AND ITS RHYTHM MATCHED THE BEAT OF MY HEART! IN A FEW MINUTES, AS SOON AS SHE'D ENTER THAT ROOM, *I WAS GOING TO KILL MY WIFE!*

PROBABLY OUT HAVING A GOOD TIME...RUNNING AROUND!

AS I SAT THERE, WAITING FOR HER, I BEGAN TO REVIEW THE HECTIC EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE DECISION I'D MADE! IT HAD ALL BEGUN THE NIGHT JEANNE'D RUNG OUR BELL!

JEANNE! JEANNE, DAH...LING!

HOW ARE YOU, MILDRED, DEAR?

WHO IS IT, MILLY?

IT'S AN OLD *SCHOOL-FRIEND* OF MINE, RALPH! STOP WORKING AND COME *MEET* HER!

BE RIGHT OUT, HON!

YOU HAVE A *LOVELY* PLACE HERE, MILDRED!

I THINK I FELL IN LOVE WITH JEANNE THE MINUTE I SAW HER! MILLY'D INTRODUCED US, BUT I DIDN'T EVEN CATCH HER NAME! I'D JUST STARED...

RALPH! THIS IS JEANNE BEARING! JEANNE...MY HUSBAND...RALPH!

H...HELLO, RALPH!

HELLO... ER... ER...

JEANNE!

HELLO... JEANNE!

HOW ABOUT SOMETHING TO DRINK, JEANNE?

WE'D SAT AROUND AND TALKED FOR THE REST OF THE EVENING! JEANNE'D BEEN IN EUROPE! SHE'D TOLD US ALL ABOUT IT! THEN, WHEN IT HAD GOTTEN RATHER LATE...

OH, DEAR! IT'S ALMOST TWELVE! I REALLY MUST GO! IT'S BEEN *SO* GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MILLY!

YOU'LL HAVE TROUBLE FINDING A CAB, JEANNE! RALPH WILL DRIVE YOU HOME!

MY HEART'D LEAPED! JEANNE'D LOOKED AT ME AND SMILED...

WOULD YOU, RALPH? THAT WOULD BE SO KIND!

NO TROUBLE AT ALL, JEANNE!

I'LL PROBABLY BE ASLEEP BEFORE YOU GET BACK, RALPH!

OKAY, DEAR! I'VE GOT MY KEY! I'LL LET MYSELF IN!

GOOD-NIGHT, MILLY!

GOOD-NIGHT, JEANNE! PLEASE COME AGAIN!

WE'D GONE DOWN IN THE ELEVATOR IN SILENCE, AND IT WASN'T UNTIL WE'D DRIVEN HALF-WAY ACROSS TOWN THAT JEANNE'D FINALLY SPOKEN...

LOVE HER, RALPH?

HUH? WHO? OH, MILLY? OF COURSE!

ARE YOU... SURE?

WHAT ARE YOU DRIVING AT, JEANNE?

OH... NOTHING!

ER... WHAT IF I'D SAID... NO, I DON'T LOVE HER?

SHE'D SMILED AT ME, AND I'D CAUGHT A GLINT OF MISCHIEF IN HER EYES...

WHY, THEN... WE'D HAVE SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT!

ER... WELL... HERE WE ARE!

WE'D REACHED HER APARTMENT BUILDING! I'D HOPPED OUT AND SWUNG AROUND TO HELP JEANNE OUT! AS SHE'D STEPPED FROM THE CAR, SHE'D SLIPPED AND I'D SAVED HER FROM FALLING BY CATCHING HER IN MY ARMS! AS I HELD HER, I FELT MY FACE GROW HOT...

WHY, RALPH! YOU'RE... BLUSHING!

PERHAPS... PERHAPS WE DO HAVE SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT, JEANNE! MAY I... COME UP?

THAT'D BEEN THE BEGINNING OF IT! I HADN'T GOTTEN BACK TO THE APARTMENT TILL THREE IN THE MORNING! LUCKILY, MILLY WAS A SOUND SLEEPER! AT BREAKFAST...

I TURNED OUT THE LIGHT AT TWELVE-THIRTY, RALPH! WHEN DID YOU GET IN!

NOT VERY MUCH LATER, MILLY. TRAFFIC WAS HEAVY!

I'D LIED TO HER! IT'D BEEN THE FIRST TIME I'D LIED TO MILLY! BUT IT WASN'T TO BE THE LAST! THERE WERE TO BE MANY MORE LIES AFTER THAT...

J.D.'S CALLED A BOARD MEETING TONIGHT, HON! I'VE GOT TO GO! DON'T WAIT UP FOR ME! YOU KNOW HOW THOSE THINGS DRAG ON!

YES, RALPH! I KNOW!

I'D NOT LIKED THE WAY MILLY'D SAID THAT! I WONDERED IF SHE REALLY *DID* KNOW! THAT NIGHT, I SAW JEANNE FOR THE SECOND TIME...

WHAT DID YOU TELL MILLY?

I TOLD HER THERE WAS A BOARD MEETING TONIGHT!

YOU'RE SO CLEVER!

DARLING!

IT'D GONE ON LIKE THAT FOR A YEAR! JEANNE AND I FELL MADLY IN LOVE! FINALLY...

THIS IS THE END, JEANNE! IT'S GOT TO STOP! IT CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS ANY LONGER! MILLY'S A BIG GIRL! SHE'S GOT TO FACE IT!

SHE'LL *NEVER* GIVE YOU A *DIVORCE*, RALPH! YOU'D HAVE TO *KILL* HER TO BE *FREE* OF HER!

KILL HER?

I *KNOW* HER, RALPH! SHE'S *POSSESSIVE!* I *REMEMBER*...*FROM SCHOOL!* I'VE GOT A *GUN*, RALPH! IT COULD BE *EASY!*

I WOULDN'T LISTEN TO JEANNE! I'D DECIDED TO TELL MILLY ALL AND DEMAND MY FREEDOM! THAT NIGHT...

NO, RALPH! I'LL *NEVER* GIVE YOU A DIVORCE! *NEVER!*

BUT I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE, MILLY! I LOVE *JEANNE!*

IT'S JUST A PASSING THING, RALPH! YOU'LL COME BACK TO ME! YOU'LL SEE!

NO, MILLY! YOU'RE *WRONG!* I'VE GOT TO GO UPSTATE ON BUSINESS! WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS WHEN I GET BACK!

BUT WHEN I'D DRIVEN UPSTATE, I'D HAD TIME TO THINK... AND I KNEW...

JEANNE IS RIGHT! MILLY WILL NEVER GIVE ME A DIVORCE... THERE IS ONLY *ONE* WAY TO BE *FREE!*

SO I'D COME BACK AFTER SETTING UP MY ALIBI! NOW, AS I SAT LISTENING TO THE TICKING OF THE NIGHT-TABLE CLOCK, I WAS WAITING FOR MILDRED TO COME HOME... WAITING TO SET MYSELF FREE...

THE ELEVATOR DOOR! SOMEONE'S GETTING OFF ON THIS FLOOR!

I HEARD THE SOUND OF A KEY SLIDING INTO THE FRONT DOOR LOCK, THE CLICK OF THE TUMBLERS AS IT TURNED, AND THE CREAK AS THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN...

IT'S MILLY! SHE CERTAINLY IS LATE!

I LISTENED TO HER FOOTSTEPS AS SHE CROSSED TO THE BEDROOM WHERE I SAT! THEY WERE MILLY'S ALL RIGHT! I COULD TELL THEM ANYWHERE! SHE FLICKED ON THE LIGHT AND STARED AT ME...

RALPH! YOU'VE COME BACK...!

THAT'S RIGHT, MILLY!

I LIFTED THE GUN AND FIRED POINT BLANK AGAIN AND AGAIN AT HER SURPRISED SHOCKED FACE! SHE FELL FORWARD ON THE SCATTER RUG AND IT STAINED RED! I STOOD OVER HER...

YEAH! I CAME BACK, MILLY! I CAME BACK TO BE *FREE... AND NOW I AM!*

I GOT OUT OF THERE FAST! I DITCHED THE GUN IN AN ASH CAN NEAR WHERE I'D PARKED, AND DROVE BACK TO JEANNE'S APARTMENT! I WANTED TO TELL HER THE GOOD NEWS! WHEN I GOT THERE, I SLIPPED UPSTAIRS CAUTIOUSLY AND KNOCKED...

JEANNE! OPEN UP! IT'S ME!

THERE WAS NO ANSWER! I TRIED THE DOOR! IT SWUNG OPEN! SUDDENLY I HEARD VOICES! SOMEONE WAS COMING UP THE STAIRS...

THAT'S *RIGHT! UP THERE!*

YOU *SURE*, LADY?

I SLIPPED INSIDE! I PEERED OUT THROUGH THE DOOR-PEEP-HOLE! A POLICEMAN... AND A WOMAN IN A HOUSE COAT, HER HAIR TIED IN CURLERS... WERE JUST OUTSIDE...

POSITIVE! I LIVE *JUST BELOW!*

BUT ARE YOU *SURE* IT WAS A *SHOT?*

I GASPED AND STEPPED BACK! MY HEEL CAUGHT ON SOMETHING SOFT! I SPUN AROUND...

JEANNE!

JEANNE LAY IN A POOL OF BLOOD! SHE'D BEEN SHOT! HER LIPS MOVED! I HAD TO PUT MY EAR CLOSE TO HEAR WHAT SHE GASPED IN HER DYING BREATH...

MILLY... DID... IT! I... SAID... SHE... WAS... POSSESSIVE...

U-U-U-H-H-H-!

THE COP CAME IN! I WAS KNEELING BESIDE JEANNE'S LIFELESS BODY! HE PUT HIS HAND ON MY SHOULDER...

YOU'D BETTER COME ALONG WITH ME, BUDDY!

IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES, THEY'RE TAKING ME INTO THE *GAS CHAMBER!* THEY SAY I MUST *PAY* FOR MY *CRIME* WITH MY *LIFE!* FUNNY THING! THEY'RE *PUNISHING ME* FOR KILLING *JEANNE!*

THE END

The temperature, Heston mused as he slapped his arms against his thighs to keep the chilled blood circulating through his body, must have dropped beyond 50 degrees below zero! Even with the fire thundering across the room, he felt the numbness stealing quietly across his back and shoulders . . . and through the thick log walls of the cabin, Heston could hear the wind wailing over the barren Yukon countryside like a thousand demons in agony. It was the kind of weather the old sourdoughs spoke of in awed whispers during the long winter nights: *when the thermometer drops beyond 50 degrees below zero,* they would murmur almost in an endless chant, *a single man can't survive out in the open.* Which was exactly what Heston planned to do . . . head out across the frozen tundra, *alone!*

Out of the corner of his eye Heston could see Logan squatting in the far corner of the cabin, rearranging something in the knapsacks. He would have to act quickly if he was to succeed, Heston knew. It was still daylight outside, and his only chance to escape to the nearest settlement . . . over 15 torturous miles away . . . was to slug Logan right now, grab their joint accumulation of gold nuggets, and flee from the cabin as fast as his legs would carry him across the frozen and desolate face of Icicle Ridge.

Knocking Logan unconscious was remarkably easy. Dragging his partner to the other side of the cabin, Heston moved back quickly to the knapsacks and closed them without a further glance, strapping his own over his shoulder with practiced speed. He patted his pocket just once before he opened the cabin door and stepped out into the agonizing cold: the nuggets were there!

As he slogged across the brittle ice crust Heston found himself repeating like doggerel the old sourdoughs' chant of fear: *when the thermometer drops beyond 50 below zero . . . a man can't survive if he travels alone.* Heston grimaced to clear his mouth of the frozen spittle which threatened to choke him. He'd make it to that settlement, all right . . . and in spite of the Yukon's favorite old wives' tale, he'd make it ALONE!

And then, it happened. The treacherous ice gave way beneath his cautious feet and he slithered uncontrollably into knee-deep water. In a moment, aware that he had just two minutes at the very most to keep from freezing to death, Heston lunged back to solid ground and stripped the already rigid fur clothing from his fast-numbing body. Just two minutes, Heston knew, in which to get a fire going out here . . . in which to dry his stiffening body and warm his clothing. It was a desperate, sickening race against time . . . one in which panic or a single wrong or inept move would surely cost his life!

With fingers already numb, he opened the knapsack and groped inside for the matches which were his only chance for salvation. And in that moment, as he searched blindly for the only means of getting a fire going, Heston knew he was doomed to death here in this vast deep-freeze. For there were no matches to be found in the knapsack . . . *that* must have been the reason why Logan was fooling around the knapsacks the moment before he was knocked unconscious!

A strange inner warmth began to steal through Heston's body and he was aware of a calming drowsiness. There was no longer any reason for him to struggle, he knew instinctively . . . no reason for him to fight the withering cold which had turned grotesquely into a sort of soothing warmth. He settled quietly to the ground, to the blue-cold ice which no longer felt chill, and his last thought before he dozed off into final sleep, was: Logan . . . he switched the matches from *my* knapsack to *his* . . . the dirty rat was planning to head out across the tundra *himself* . . . after he had stolen our nuggets . . .

MISSED BY TWO HEIRS!

HIS AGING BODY CRIPPLED WITH ARTHRITIS, HENRY BORDIN MADE HIS WAY PAINFULLY DOWN THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE OF HIS LUXURIOUS MANSION! FROM BEHIND A PARTIALLY CLOSED DOOR, LEADING OFF THE MARBLE FOYER, HIDDEN EYES WATCHED HIM...

SEE, JULIUS? SEE HOW HE *LEANS* AGAINST THE *BANNISTER FOR SUPPORT?*

YOU'RE *RIGHT*, MARTIN! HE PUTS HIS *FULL WEIGHT* UPON IT!

HENRY BORDIN'S TWO STEP-SONS STUDIED THE OLD MAN AS HE HOBBLED DOWN THE STAIRCASE...

JULIUS? MARTIN? WHERE THE DEVIL *ARE* THOSE GOOD-FOR-NOTHINGS?

HE'S CALLING, MARTIN!

I'LL GO, JULIUS!

MARTIN BORDIN STEPPED FROM BEHIND THE PARTIALLY CLOSED DOOR AND APPROACHED HIS STEP-FATHER...
DID YOU CALL ME, FATHER?
WHERE WERE YOU, MARTIN? YOU KNOW I NEED HELP COMING DOWN THE STEPS!
I'M SORRY, FATHER! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WANTED TO COME DOWN!
WELL, FROM NOW ON, MAKE IT YOUR BUSINESS TO KNOW!
REMEMBER, YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING! YOU'RE ONLY LIVING HERE BECAUSE YOUR MOTHER SO STIPULATED IN HER WILL!
I REMEMBER, FATHER!
OLD MAN BORDIN TURNED AND HOBBLED ACROSS THE MARBLE FOYER TOWARD A PAIR OF FRENCH DOORS LEADING TO A SUN ROOM! HE SNEERED BACK AT MARTIN...
AND THAT GOES FOR THAT NO-GOOD BROTHER OF YOURS, TOO! NOW, BRING MY TEA! IT'S ALMOST TIME! I'LL BE IN THE SOLARIUM!
YES, FATHER!
MARTIN WATCHED HIS STEP-FATHER LIMP OUT THROUGH THE FRENCH DOORS...THEN TURNED AND RE-ENTERED THE ROOM WHERE JULIUS WAITED...
DID YOU HEAR HIM? I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY LONGER, JULIUS! I CAN'T!
MOTHER WAS A FOOL! SHE NEVER SAW HIM FOR WHAT HE REALLY IS! HE JUST MARRIED HER FOR HER MONEY!
IT'S BEEN TEN YEARS SINCE SHE DIED! TEN YEARS SINCE SHE WILLED HIM THE FORTUNE THAT WAS RIGHTFULLY OURS!
SHE THOUGHT HE'D BE GOOD TO US! INSTEAD, WE'VE HAD TO WAIT ON HIM HAND AND FOOT!
NOW WE'VE GOT TO WAIT TILL HE DIES TO GET THE MONEY! THAT MAY NOT BE FOR ANOTHER TEN YEARS! I CAN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER! WE'VE GOT TO KILL HIM!
YOU'RE RIGHT, MARTIN! IT'S THE ONLY WAY! NOW, WHAT IS IT YOU WERE SAYING...ABOUT THE BANNISTER.. AND HOW HE LEANS ON IT?
2

SUDDENLY, THE OLD MAN'S VOICE SHRIEKED FROM THE SOLARIUM...

MARTIN! WHERE'S THE TEA, YOU SLOW-POKE?

OH... COMING, FATHER!

I'LL TELL YOU LATER, JULIUS!

ALL RIGHT! NOW I'VE TO GO INTO TOWN FOR HIM! I HAVE TO PICK UP A PACKAGE!

THAT NIGHT, AFTER JULIUS HAD RETURNED WITH THE OLD MAN'S PACKAGE, HE WENT TO MARTIN'S ROOM...

WHAT DID YOU PICK UP FOR HIM IN TOWN, JULIUS?

I DON'T KNOW! IT WAS A LONG THIN PACKAGE! FELT LIKE A... A...OH, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE! TELL ME YOUR PLAN, MARTIN!

MY PLAN IS VERY SIMPLE, JULIUS! I SHOWED YOU HOW HE LEANS HEAVILY ON THE BANNISTER WHEN HE COMES DOWNSTAIRS UNAIDED!

YES...

THE FLOOR OF THE FOYER IS MARBLE, JULIUS! A FALL FROM, SAY, NEAR THE TOP OF THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE WOULD... KILL A MAN IN HIS CONDITION!

YOU MEAN...

WE MERELY LOOSEN THE BANNISTER IN THAT SECTION! WHEN HE LEANS ON IT... IT GIVES WAY...AND OVER HE GOES! SPLATT!

WHEN DO WE DO IT, MARTIN?

TONIGHT! TOMORROW MORNING WE WON'T BRING HIM BREAKFAST ON A TRAY! WE'LL LET HIM HOLLER...AND HE'LL BE FORCED TO COME DOWN... LOOKING FOR US!

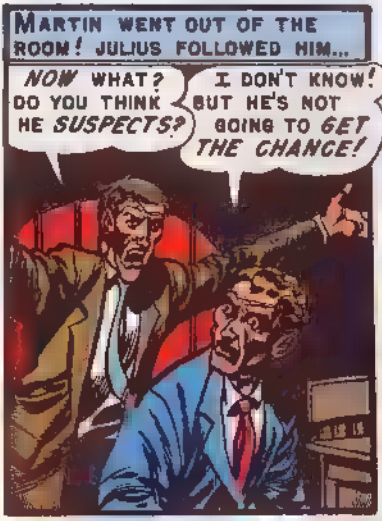
GOOD! TONIGHT, THEN! WHEN HE'S ASLEEP!

THAT NIGHT, AS THE MAGNIFICENT CLOCK IN THE FOYER OF THE BORDIN MANSION TOLLED TWO A.M., JULIUS AND MARTIN BORDIN WORKED FEVERISHLY ON THE BANNISTER... LOOSENING BOLTS...SAWING PARTLY THROUGH...

TRY NOT TO MAKE ANY NOISE!

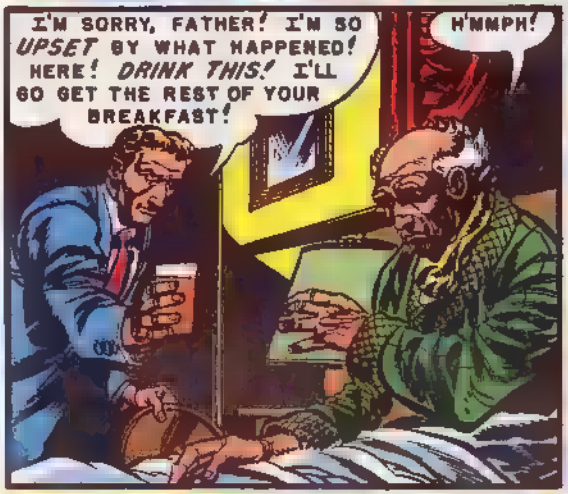
WHEN WE GET THROUGH, A STIFF BREEZE WILL BLOW THIS RAILING OFF...

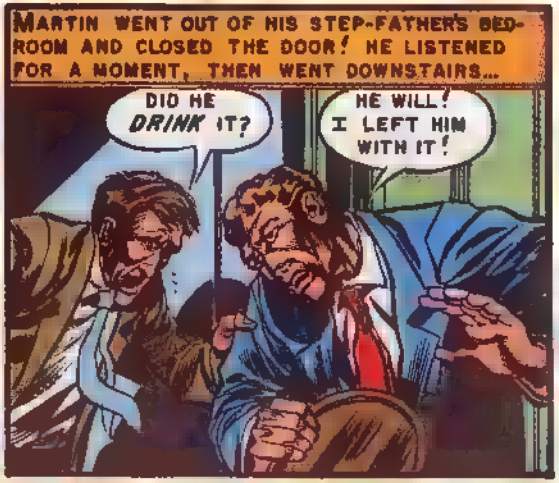
THE NEXT MORNING, AS OLD HENRY BORDIN YELLED FOR HIS TWO STEP-SONS, THEY COWERED BEHIND THE LIBRARY DOOR, WATCHING...
MARTIN! JULIUS!
HIS DOOR IS OPENING!
HE'S COMING OUT!
THE OLD MAN HOBBLED TOWARD THE HEAD OF THE STAIRS, RAVING AND RANTING...
WHERE'S MY BREAKFAST, YOU LAZY LOUTS?
HE'S COMING TO THE FIRST STEP!
WHAT'S THAT HE'S CARRYING?
HENRY REACHED OUT A WRINKLED HAND AND GRASPED THE BANNISTER! IN HIS OTHER HAND HE CARRIED...
A CANE! HE'S USING A CANE!
THAT'S WHAT WAS IN THE PACKAGE!
THE BANNISTER SWAYED, THEN GAVE WAY...
THERE IT GOES!
HE'S NOT GOING WITH IT!
CRAK
THE OLD MAN TOTTERED FOR A MOMENT... THEN PUT OUT HIS NEW CANE AND CAUGHT HIS BALANCE! BELOW, THE BANNISTER CRASHED AND SPLINTERED ON THE MARBLE FLOOR...
JULIUS! MARTIN! COME QUICKLY!
IT DIDN'T WORK, MARTIN! IT DIDN'T WORK!
FRIGHTENED AND SHAKEN, MR. BORDIN SCREAMED AGAIN AND AGAIN FOR HIS STEP-SONS! FINALLY, THEY CAME... ACTING SURPRISED...
WHAT IS IT, FATHER? WHAT HAPPENED?
LOOK FOR YOURSELVES!
GOOD LORD! THE BANNISTER BROKE!
THEY HELPED THE TREMBLING MAN BACK TO HIS BEDROOM...
THERE, THERE, FATHER! TAKE IT EASY!
I COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED! I... I...
ER... I'LL GET YOU SOME BREAKFAST, FATHER! YOU'LL FEEL BETTER!

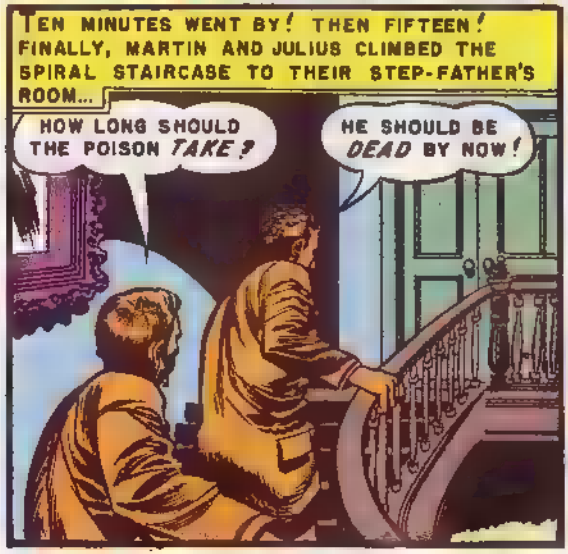

MARTIN WENT OUT OF THE ROOM! JULIUS FOLLOWED HIM...
NOW WHAT? DO YOU THINK HE SUSPECTS?
I DON'T KNOW! BUT HE'S NOT GOING TO GET THE CHANCE!

MARTIN HURRIED DOWN THE STAIRS...JULIUS AT HIS HEELS!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
POISON HIM! PUT IT IN HIS ORANGE JUICE!

TEN MINUTES LATER, MARTIN BROUGHT A GLASS OF ORANGE JUICE TO HIS STEP-FATHER...
FEELING BETTER, FATHER?
A LITTLE! WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG? WHERE'S MY EGGS AND COFFEE?


I'M SORRY, FATHER! I'M SO UPSET BY WHAT HAPPENED! HERE! DRINK THIS! I'LL GO GET THE REST OF YOUR BREAKFAST!
H'MMPH!


MARTIN WENT OUT OF HIS STEP-FATHER'S BEDROOM AND CLOSED THE DOOR! HE LISTENED FOR A MOMENT, THEN WENT DOWNSTAIRS...
DID HE DRINK IT?
HE WILL! I LEFT HIM WITH IT!


TEN MINUTES WENT BY! THEN FIFTEEN! FINALLY, MARTIN AND JULIUS CLIMBED THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE TO THEIR STEP-FATHER'S ROOM...
HOW LONG SHOULD THE POISON TAKE?
HE SHOULD BE DEAD BY NOW!

THE TWO MEN LISTENED OUTSIDE THE DOOR! THERE WAS NO SOUND! THEY SWUNG OPEN THE DOOR...
GOOD LORD!
HE...HE'S...

THE BED WAS EMPTY! THE OLD MAN WAS...
GONE! HE'S GONE!
LOOK! ON THE TABLE! THE GLASS OF JUICE! IT'S HALF EMPTY! AND THERE'S A NOTE...
MARTIN PICKED UP THE NOTE AND READ IT IN A FALTERING NERVOUS WHISPER...
IT SAYS, 'MARTIN AND JULIUS, I HAVE TAKEN A SAMPLE OF THE JUICE WITH ME! I KNOW THE COLLAPSE OF THE BANNISTER WAS NO ACCIDENT! YOU HAVE TRIED TO MURDER ME TWICE! I'VE GONE TO THE POLICE!'
THE POLICE!
ATTEMPTED MURDER! THEY'LL GIVE US TWENTY-FIVE YEARS!
MARTIN RUSHED DOWN THE STAIRCASE, SOBBING...
WE'RE FINISHED! THROUGH! WE'LL ROT IN JAIL FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES! NOT ME! NOT ME!
MARTIN! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
JULIUS CAUGHT UP WITH MARTIN IN THE KITCHEN! HE'D POURED TWO GLASSES OF BLUE-GREEN LIQUID...
MARTIN! NO! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DRINK POISON!
OF COURSE, YOU FOOL! THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR US! HERE! TAKE IT YOURSELF! OR WOULD YOU RATHER DIE IN JAIL?
MARTIN DRAINED HIS GLASS! JULIUS WATCHED HIM... HORRIFIED...
NOW YOU DRINK IT! DRINK IT UP, YOU FOOL!
NO! I CAN'T! I'M AFRAID!
THE BACK DOORBELL RANG! MARTIN LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW...
IT'S THE POLICE! THEY'RE HERE! DRINK IT... BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
YES! YES! IT'S THE ONLY THING...
THEY WENT TO THE DOOR ARM IN ARM... PROUD... DEFIANT! NOTHING COULD HARM THEM NOW... NOTHING! IN A FEW MINUTES IT WOULD ALL BE OVER! THE POLICEMAN'S FACE WAS STRAINED AND TENSE...
COME IN, OFFICER! IT'S COLD OUTSIDE!
THERE'S AN OLD MAN DOWN THE ROAD! HE MUST HAVE SLIPPED ON THE ICE! CRACKED HIS SKULL! HE... HE'S DEAD! HE MUST HAVE BEEN CRAZY! RUNNIN' AROUND LIKE THAT IN HIS PAJAMAS... WITH A BOTTLE OF ORANGE JUICE! DID HE LIVE HERE?
THE END
6

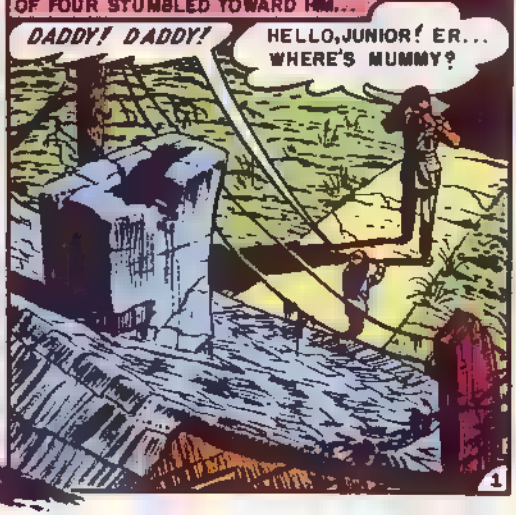
THE HAUNT OF FEAR

HEE, HEE! YEP, KIDDIES! IT'S *ME* AGAIN...*THE OLD WITCH*... MISTRESS OF *THE HAUNT OF FEAR!* IN EACH ISSUE OF CRIME SUSPENSTORIES, I LIGHT THE FIRE UNDER MY *CAULDRON* AND BREW ANOTHER *TASTY TALE OF TERROR* FOR YOU TO *GULP!* THIS TIME I'VE COOKED UP A *DISGUSTINGLY DELIGHTFUL YARN* DEALING WITH THE *HOUSING SITUATION* AROUND *ARMY CAMPS!* I SEE BY THE *NEWSPAPERS* THAT THIS IS A VERY *TIMELY TOPIC!* NOW I DON'T MEAN TO INFER THAT *ALL* LANDLORDS ARE LIKE *EDGAR CHAMBERS*...THE HERO OF THIS EPIC! THERE ARE A FEW *CONSIDERATE* ONES, I'M SURE! BUT THERE ARE FAR *TOO MANY* OF *MR. CHAMBERS' TYPE* AROUND! IT IS TO *THESE* LANDLORDS THAT THIS STORY IS *FIENDISHLY DEDICATED!* I CALL IT...

FRIEND TO 'OUR BOYS'!

GHASTLY

CORPORAL BARRY TACKER STEPPED OFF THE BUS THAT RAN BETWEEN TOWN AND THE ARMY BASE WHERE HE WAS STATIONED! HE LIFTED HIS GARRISON CAP AND MOPPED HIS SWEATING BROW! LORD, IT WAS HOT! AND THE *BUGS*...THE BUGS WERE EATING HIM UP ALIVE! HE SCOWLED AT THE LOW, SQUAT, RAMSHACKLE BUNGALOW WITH THE LEAKY ROOF THAT HIS FAMILY WAS FORCED TO CALL HOME! SUDDENLY THE DOOR SQUEEKED OPEN ON ITS RUSTY HINGES AND A TINY WIDE-EYED BOY OF FOUR STUMBLED TOWARD HIM...



THE YOUNGSTER LOOKED UP AT HIS SOLDIER FATHER WITH SAD EYES...

MUMMY'S INSIDE! MUMMY *CRYING!*

OH! AGAIN? WELL! C'MON! LET'S GO IN...

CPL. TACKER PASSED THROUGH THE ROTTING DOORWAY INTO THE SPARSELY FURNISHED PLASTER-CRACKED LIVING ROOM...

SOB...SOB... SOB...

MUMMY! DADDY'S HOME! LOOK!

EVE TACKER SPUN AROUND AND GASPED! HER EYES WERE RED... HER FACE, TEAR-STAINED...

BARRY! YOU...YOU'RE *EARLY!*

Y...YEAH! THE SARGE GAVE ME MY PASS BEFORE RETREAT! YOU... YOU'VE BEEN *CRYING,* EVE!

I CAN'T *HELP* IT, BARRY! IT'S *HORRIBLE* HERE! I CAN'T *STAND* IT!

DON'T WORRY, BABY! WE'LL GET ANOTHER PLACE! I HEARD A RUMOR THAT THEY'RE SHIPPING "A" COMPANY OUT...

DADDY! DADDY! LOOKA MY *SKEETA BITES!*

BARRY STUDIED HIS SON'S FACE! IT WAS MARRED WITH RED WELTS...

YES, BARRY! LOOK AT THEM! THE BUGS EAT HIM UP ALIVE!

WE'VE GOT TO GET MR. CHAMBERS TO GIVE US SCREENS! THAT'S ALL THERE ■ TO IT!

THISA BIG ONE... HERE!

SUDDENLY, EVE BEGAN TO CRY AGAIN! SHE CLUNG TO BARRY...WEEPING...

I *NEVER* SHOULD HAVE COME HERE WITH THE BABY! WE SHOULD HAVE STAYED *HOME!* I'D HAVE *MANAGED!* AT LEAST BACK HOME, WE DIDN'T HAVE *RATS!*

RATS?!

YOU NEVER *HEAR* THEM! YOU'RE TOO *EXHAUSTED!* YOU SLEEP THROUGH! BUT *I* HEAR THEM! THEY'RE ■ THE *WALLS!* THEY SCURRY AROUND ■ THE KITCHEN! SOMETIMES I THINK THEY'RE IN THE BEDROOM WITH US! I'M AFRAID, BARRY! I'M AFRAID! SUPPOSE THEY ATTACK THE BABY?

THAT DOES IT! I'M GOING OVER TO *SEE* MR. CHAMBERS!

LATER...PRECIOUS MINUTES LATER...MINUTES THAT HE COULD HAVE BEEN SPENDING WITH HIS FAMILY...CPL. BARRY TACKER ARRIVED AT THE HOME OF EDGAR CHAMBERS...

ALL RIGHT, SOLDIER! WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? MAKE IT SNAPPY! I'M A BUSY MAN!

IT'S ABOUT THE PLACE WE RENT FROM YOU, MR. CHAMBERS! YOU'VE GOT TO *DO* SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

WE HAVE *NO SCREENS* ON THE WINDOWS! MY KID'S GETTING EATEN UP BY THE *MOSQUITOES!* AND THE PLACE IS INFESTED WITH *RATS!* I SHOULD THINK THAT FOR *SEVENTY-EIGHT DOLLARS A MONTH...*

LOOK, SOLDIER! IF YOU *DON'T LIKE IT, MOVE OUT!* I COULD RENT THAT PLACE TONIGHT... AND WITH A *FIFTEEN PERCENT INCREASE,* TOO! THERE'RE *PLENTY* G.I.'S *DYING* FOR A PLACE SO'S THEY KIN BRING DOWN THEIR WIVES!

CPL. TACKER GRITTED HIS TEETH! HE HAD TO CLENCH HIS FISTS TO KEEP FROM SWINGING AT MR. CHAMBERS' FLABBY FACE...

AS A MATTER OF FACT, TACKER... I BEEN MEANING TO TALK TO YOU! I GOT THE *'LECTRIC BILL* ON YOUR PLACE TODAY! YOU BURNIN' ANYTHING OVER A *TWENTY-FIVE WATT BULB?*

OF COURSE! WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO? GO *BLIND?* I BOUGHT A FEW *HUNDRED* WATT BULBS AND PUT THEM IN!

WELL, *TAKE 'EM OUT!* NOTHIN' BUT *TWENTY-FIVE WATT BULBS! THAT'S* WHAT'S *INCLUDED* IN THE *RENT...* AN' *THAT'S* WHAT YOU *BURN!*

LISTEN, CHAMBERS, YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A *LEECH!* WHY IF THERE WASN'T AN *ARMY CAMP* OUTSIDE OF TOWN, YOU COULDN'T RENT THAT HOLE I LIVE IN FOR *SEVEN DOLLARS* A MONTH, NO LESS *SEVENTY-EIGHT!*

SCRAM, SOLDIER! I'M BUSY!

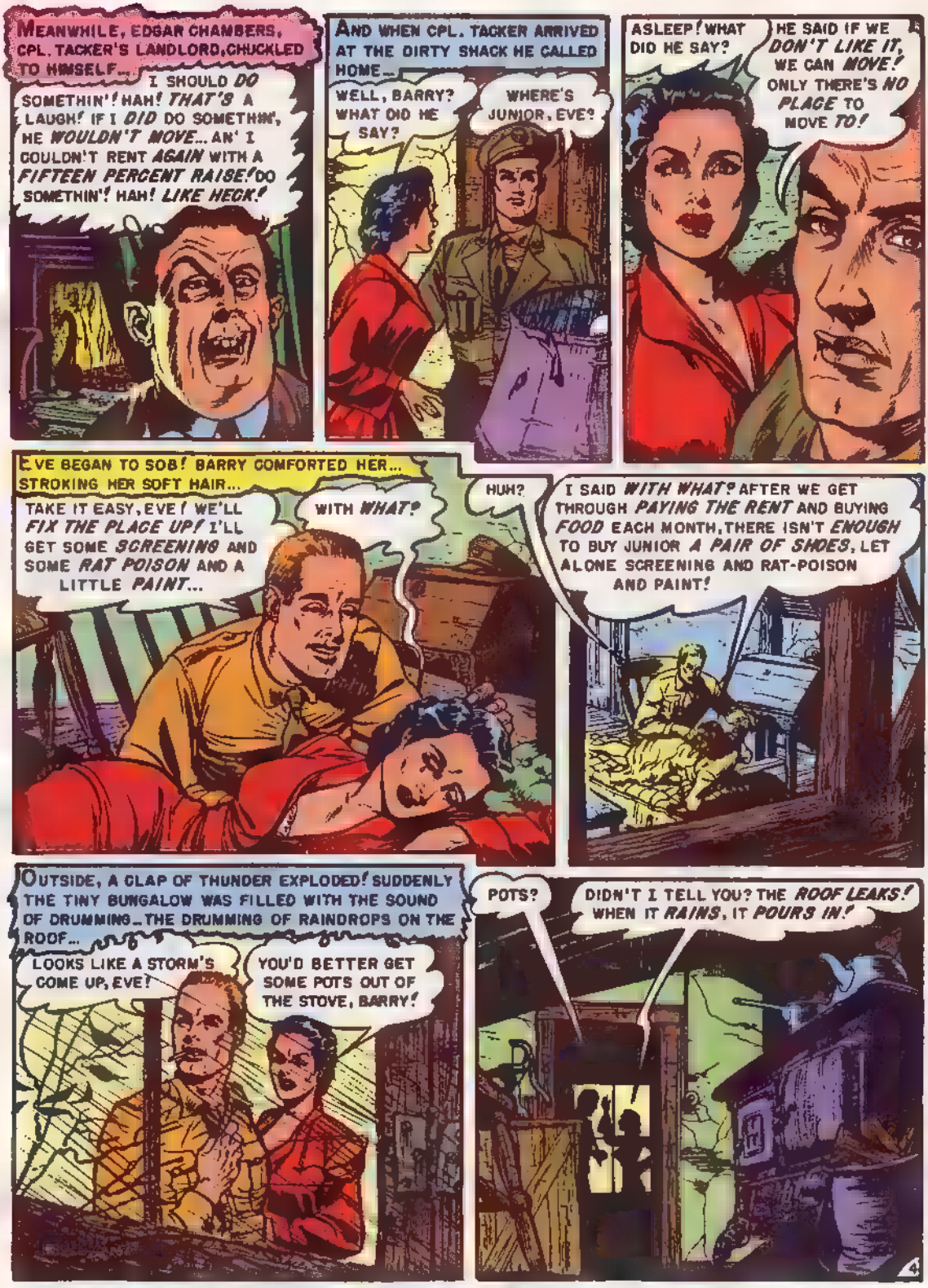
BARRY CURSED AS HE SLAMMED OUT OF EDGAR CHAMBERS' HOUSE! HE MADE HIS WAY ACROSS TOWN TO THE U.S.O. CLUB AND ENTERED! INSIDE, HE STOPPED AT A DESK WITH A SIGN ABOVE IT WHICH READ...'HOUSING AID'...

YES, CORPORAL? WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

I... I GOT A WIFE AND KID, MA'AM! THEY'RE *HERE...IN TOWN!* I WAS WONDERIN' IF YOU KNOW OF A *PLACE...AN APARTMENT* OR A *HOUSE* WE COULD RENT? A *CLEAN* PLACE...*NOT LIKE THE ONE WE...*

YOU MEAN YOU *HAVE* A PLACE *NOW,* SOLDIER? *LOOK! SEE* THIS CARD FILE? THERE'RE *TWO HUNDRED AND TWELVE NAMES IN THERE! G.I.'S!* LIKE *YOU!* ONLY THEY *DON'T* HAVE A PLACE! THEIR FAMILIES ARE *STILL LIVING* AT THE *LAST BASE* THEY WERE STATIONED AT! TAKE MY ADVICE, SOLDIER...*STAY PUT*...AND *COUNT YOUR LUCKY STARS!*

YES... MA'AM!


MEANWHILE, EDGAR CHAMBERS, CPL. TACKER'S LANDLORD, CHUCKLED TO HIMSELF...
I SHOULD DO SOMETHIN'! HAH! THAT'S A LAUGH! IF I DID DO SOMETHIN', HE WOULDN'T MOVE... AN' I COULDN'T RENT AGAIN WITH A FIFTEEN PERCENT RAISE! DO SOMETHIN'! HAH! LIKE HECK!
AND WHEN CPL. TACKER ARRIVED AT THE DIRTY SHACK HE CALLED HOME...
WELL, BARRY? WHAT DID HE SAY?
WHERE'S JUNIOR, EVE?
ASLEEP! WHAT DID HE SAY?
HE SAID IF WE DON'T LIKE IT, WE CAN MOVE! ONLY THERE'S NO PLACE TO MOVE TO!
EVE BEGAN TO SOB! BARRY COMFORTED HER... STROKING HER SOFT HAIR...
TAKE IT EASY, EVE! WE'LL FIX THE PLACE UP! I'LL GET SOME SCREENING AND SOME RAT POISON AND A LITTLE PAINT...
WITH WHAT?
HUH?
I SAID WITH WHAT? AFTER WE GET THROUGH PAYING THE RENT AND BUYING FOOD EACH MONTH, THERE ISN'T ENOUGH TO BUY JUNIOR A PAIR OF SHOES, LET ALONE SCREENING AND RAT-POISON AND PAINT!
OUTSIDE, A CLAP OF THUNDER EXPLODED! SUDDENLY THE TINY BUNGALOW WAS FILLED WITH THE SOUND OF DRUMMING... THE DRUMMING OF RAINDROPS ON THE ROOF...
LOOKS LIKE A STORM'S COME UP, EVE!
YOU'D BETTER GET SOME POTS OUT OF THE STOVE, BARRY!
POTS?
DIDN'T I TELL YOU? THE ROOF LEAKS! WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS IN!
4

AND SO, SLOWLY THE SWELTERING SUMMER PASSED FOR CPL. BARRY TACKER AND HIS FAMILY! FALL CAME AND THEN WINTER! AND WITH WINTER... CAME THE COLD...

LOOK! WHAT ABOUT HEAT? MY KID'S GOT A COLD ALREADY? WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO DELIVER SOME COAL?

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO, SOLDIER? I ORDERED IT! TAKE IT EASY, IT'LL COME!

FINALLY, AFTER MANY SHIVERY DAYS, THE COAL CAME! IT WAS DUMPED IN THE CELLAR... IN THE BIN...

NOT ME, BARRY. I'M NOT GOING DOWN THERE!

BUT, BABY! YOU'LL HAVE TO PUT COAL IN WHILE I'M AT THE BASE!

I'M AFRAID, BARRY! THE RATS ARE DOWN THERE! I CAN *HEAR* THEM...

YOU'VE GOT TO GO DOWN, EVE! WE *CAN'T* LET THE FIRE GO OUT!

SO EVE STEELED HERSELF AND FED THE FIRE TO KEEP THE DRAFTY BUNGALOW WARM! TOWARDS THE END OF DECEMBER...

THAT'S WHAT I SAID, MISTER CHAMBERS! WE'RE *OUT OF COAL!*

TOO BAD! SHOULD HAVE LASTED YOU TO THE *END OF THE MONTH!* NOW YOU'LL HAVE TO *WAIT!*

WAIT? ARE YOU *CRAZY?* I GOT A *KID! WE CAN'T GO WITHOUT HEAT!*

OKAY! I'LL *GIVE* YOU *EXTRA COAL!* BUT IT COMES OUT OF *YOUR SECURITY!*

WHEN CPL. TACKER HAD RENTED THE RUN-DOWN SHACK FROM CHAMBERS, HE'D BEEN FORCED TO PAY ONE MONTH'S RENT IN ADVANCE AS SECURITY! THIS WAS TO BE HELD UNTIL BARRY MOVED...

TAKE IT OUT OF MY SECURITY THEN! ONLY *GET THE COAL TO THE HOUSE TOMORROW!* AND ONE MORE THING! THE *CELLAR STEPS ARE CAVING IN! THEY'RE ROTTED AND WORM-EATEN!*

YEAH? THEN YOU BETTER *WATCH* YOURSELF GOIN' UP AN' DOWN!

YOU BETTER FIX 'EM! MY WIFE COULD FALL ON 'EM! IF THEY *AREN'T* FIXED, I'LL GO TO THE *LOCAL RENT BOARD...*

GO AHEAD! THEY'RE *MY* FRIENDS UP THERE, *NOT YOURS!*

HEE, HEE! NICE GUY... THIS CHAMBERS, EH, KIDDIES? WELL, TO GO ON WITH OUR TALE... WINTER CREPT BY AND SPRING CAME TO THE DIRTY LITTLE SHACK THAT THE TACKERS CALLED HOME! AND WITH IT CAME THE SPRING RAINS WHICH POURED IN THROUGH THE LEAKY ROOF! THEN...

...ONE DAY, CPL. BARRY GOT OFF THE BUS FROM THE ARMY BASE WEARING A CHEERFUL SMILE! HE WAITED FOR THE FRONT DOOR TO OPEN AND JUNIOR TO COME RUSHING OUT AS USUAL... BUT NOTHING HAPPENED! HE HURRIED UP THE WALK AND INTO THE HOUSE...

EVE? JUNIOR? ANYONE HOME?

SOB...

IT CAME FROM THE BEDROOM... EVE'S QUIET WHIMPERING...

EVE! WHAT *IS* IT? *WHAT HAPPENED?*

THE RATS! I FOUND ONE IN JUNIOR'S CRIB! IT MIGHT HAVE *BITTEN* HIM...

EVE CONTINUED TO SOB...

...AND TODAY, THE *BOTTOM STEP* OF THE CELLAR STAIRS *COLLAPSED! LOOK!* I *BRUISED MY KNEE!* I MIGHT HAVE FALLEN *BADLY!* OH, BARRY! *I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY LONGER!*

YOU WON'T *HAVE* TO, EVE! *PACK YOUR THINGS!* WE'RE *MOVING INTO A HOTEL!*

A *HOTEL!* BUT WE CAN'T *AFFORD* IT!

OH, *YES WE CAN!* I JUST FOUND OUT THAT I'M *SHIPPING* NEXT WEEK! WE CAN LIVE IN THE HOTEL *UNTIL THEN* WITH THE *MONTH'S SECURITY* I GAVE MR. CHAMBERS!

AND SO BARRY PACKED HIS FAMILY OFF TO THE HOTEL IN TOWN AND WENT TO SEE MR. CHAMBERS...

THAT'S RIGHT! *I'VE MOVED!* YOU'RE *PAID UP* TO THE *END OF THE MONTH!* NOW I WANT MY *MONTH'S SECURITY!*

HOLD ON THERE, SOLDIER! YOU'RE *FORGETTING* A LITTLE MATTER OF *EXTRA COAL... TWELVE DOLLARS!*

OKAY! TAKE IT OUT! THAT LEAVES *SIXTY-SIX BUCKS! FORK IT OVER!*

NOT SO FAST, SOLDIER! FIRST I'LL HAVE TO *EXAMINE* THE PLACE TO SEE IF THERE'S BEEN ANY *DAMAGE* DONE... AND *DEDUCT THE COSTS* FROM THE SIXTY-SIX DOLLARS!

THAT EVENING, EDGAR CHAMBERS PULLED UP BEFORE THE VACANT BUNGALOW AND GOT OUT OF HIS NICE NEW CAR...

STAYED HERE THE LONGEST, THEY DID! I TRIED TO MAKE IT TOUGH FOR THEM BUT THEY HUNG ON! WHY, I MIGHT HAVE RAISED THE RENT TWICE IN THE TIME THEY WUZ HERE...

MR. CHAMBERS ENTERED THE RUN DOWN SHACK AND LOOKED AROUND...

LET'S SEE...*SEVENTY-EIGHT...PLUS FIFTEEN PERCENT* ...MAKES...HMMM...CARRY FOUR... ELEVEN-SEVENTY...*EIGHTY NINE BUCKS...EIGHTY NINE BUCKS FOR THIS RAT TRAP! HAW, HAW!*

EDGAR OPENED THE CELLAR DOOR! HE GAZED INTO THE GLOOM...

WELL... I'VE GOT TO CHARGE UP SIXTY-SIX BUCKS WORTH OF *REPAIRS* TO THE LAST SUCKERS, SO I MIGHT AS WELL START IN THE CELLAR! THE *FURNACE* IS ALWAYS GOOD FOR A *TENNER*... BOILER BUSTED OR SOMETHIN'...

EDGAR CHAMBERS STARTED DOWN THE CELLAR STEPS! THEY CREAKED AND GROANED UNDER HIS WEIGHT! SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A SPLINTERING CRASH, AS THE WHOLE STAIRCASE GAVE WAY...

YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

WHEN EDGAR CAME TO, HE WAS STARING INTO THE BEADY BLACK EYES OF A RAT! HE COULD HEAR OTHERS SCRATCHING ACROSS THE CELLAR FLOOR TOWARD HIM... THEIR SQUEEKING AND SQUEELING FILLING THE DARKNESS! EDGAR TRIED TO MOVE...

GOOD LORD! MY ARM... IT'S BROKEN...AND I'M PINNED UNDER A BEAM!

EDGAR LOOKED UP! THE MAIN CELLAR BEAM HAD COME LOOSE WHEN THE STAIRS COLLAPSED! IT LAY ACROSS EDGAR... IMPRISONING HIM! ONE OF EDGAR'S ARMS WAS TWISTED GROTESQUELY BENEATH HIM! HE WAS *TRAPPED*... AND THE RATS WERE SURROUNDING HIM... THEIR RAZOR-SHARP FANGS GLEAMING...

HELP ME! SOMEBODY! OH, LORD! THE RATS...THEY'RE...THEY'RE ATTACKING ME!

THE GLOOM OF THE CELLAR WAS PIERCED BY THE SHRIEKS OF EDGAR CHAMBERS, AS TINY KNIFE-LIKE TEETH BEGAN TO RIP AND SLASH! HE LAY HELPLESSLY PINNED BENEATH THE ROTTED BEAM... UNABLE TO FIGHT OFF THE GNAWING GRAY SHADOWS! HELPLESS...TRAPPED... LIKE THE SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES THAT EDGAR CHAMBERS ONCE GNAWED UPON... CHEWING INTO THEIR POCKETBOOKS... RIPPING AT THEIR SAVINGS...

... AND SO, AS EDGAR'S SCREAMS OF PAIN GROW MORE AND MORE HYSTERICAL, WE LEAVE THE DINGY CELLAR... AND EDGAR... TO HIS INEVITABLE END! I HOPE YOU *LIKED* MY LITTLE *MORSEL OF MAD MORBIDITY!* PERHAPS IF SOME OF YOU LANDLORDS READ THIS... I MEAN THE TYPE THAT FIT *EDGAR'S* BLOODY SHOES... YOU'LL TAKE HEED! DON'T BE A *RAT* TO THE *G.I.'S*, MISTER! NO TELLING WHEN *YOU* MIGHT COME FACE TO FACE WITH ONE, AND WIND UP WITH THE SAME RIPPING GOOD TIME EDGAR'S HAVING *RIGHT NOW!*

The Old Witch